CHAPTER II

ILLUSTRATIVE CHANGES TO CURRENT CONVENTIONAL FORCES TO REFLECT REVISED ROLES AND MISSIONS

The debate over consolidating roles and missions will most likely continue. The balance of this paper examines in some detail the issue of duplication among U.S. conventional forces--those designed to fight nonnuclear wars such as Operation Desert Storm. These forces represent the most costly portion of U.S. military forces. To provide information for the ongoing debate, this paper presents several illustrative options that would constitute more far-reaching changes in service roles and missions than those the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended.

RELY MORE ON THE MARINE CORPS FOR EXPEDITIONARY OR CONTINGENCY FORCES

The Army and the Marine Corps both field forces designed to conduct combat on land, though their missions are slightly different. According to General Powell, the Army's role is to "organize, train, and equip forces for the conduct of prompt and sustained combat operations on land--specifically, forces to defeat enemy land forces and to seize, occupy, and defend land areas."[1] Similarly, the Marine Corps's role is to train, organize, and equip forces "to provide Fleet Marine Forces of combined arms, together with supporting air components, for service with the fleet in the seizure or defense of advanced naval bases and for the conduct of land operations as may be essential to the prosecution of a naval campaign" (see Box 1).[2] Although both types of forces are designed to fight on land and do share some common equipment, the combat units of the Marines and the Army differ, as do their fighting philosophies and many of their weapons. Nevertheless, there is sufficient overlap between the two, particularly in expeditionary forces, to question the need for similar forces in two different services.

The active portion of the U.S. Army consists of 12 divisions, 8 of which are generally regarded as "heavy"--that is, equipped with tanks and other armored vehicles. The eight heavy divisions, which the Army is planning to

1. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Report on the Roles, Missions, and Functions of the Armed Forces of the United States* (February 1993), p. III-35.

2. Ibid., p. III-35.

BOX 1.
CURRENT SERVICE ROLES AND MISSIONS

Roles: Broad and enduring purposes for which the Congress established the services.

Army. Organize, train, and equip forces for prompt and sustained combat on land.

Navy. Organize, train, and equip forces for prompt and sustained combat on and from the sea.

Air Force. Organize, train, and equip forces for prompt and sustained offensive and defensive air operations.

Marine Corps. Organize, train, and equip forces for service with the fleet in the seizure or defense of naval bases, and for the conduct of such land operations as may be essential to the prosecution of a naval campaign.

Missions: Tasks assigned by the President or Secretary of Defense to the commanders in the field.

Typical missions assigned to the services are:

Army

- Seize and defend enemy air bases, ports, and other key facilities.
- Conduct large-scale armored operations.
- Provide humanitarian aid and disaster relief.

Navy

- Attack targets on shore from the sea.
- Promote regional stability and ensure timely response to crises using forward-deployed and forward-based forces.
- Deploy and sustain U.S. combat forces overseas through resupply and prepositioning.

Air Force

- Defend the United States, its forces, and allies from air attack.
- Provide close air support to ground forces.
- Attack enemy assets such as transportation infrastructure and resupply facilities.

Marines

- Conduct amphibious assaults.
- Seize and defend enemy air bases, ports, and other key facilities.
- Conduct noncombatant evacuation operations and hostage rescue.
- Provide humanitarian aid and disaster relief.

SOURCE: Congressional Budget Office based on Les Aspin, Secretary of Defense, *Annual Report to the President and the Congress* (January 1994); private communication from Marine Corps; and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Report on the Roles, Missions, and Functions of the Armed Forces of the United States* (February 1993).

reduce to six divisions in the next five years, are primarily intended to be used against other armored forces. The other four divisions, referred to as "light" divisions, are useful against less heavily armored forces and were designed to be dispatched quickly and transported easily to trouble spots around the world. They include one airborne division, one air assault division, and two light infantry divisions (LIDs).[3]

The active portion of the Marine Corps includes three divisions, but Marine units are designed to be deployed in task forces, which typically include a Marine ground unit plus its accompanying air support. Thus, when Marine units are dispatched to trouble spots, they usually are sent as combined arms teams that include both air and ground forces.

Since the Army is reducing the size of its heavy forces during the next five years, the greatest area of duplication between the Army and the Marines that will remain will be in lighter forces. These forces could be consolidated by eliminating some of the Army's units designed to be dispatched quickly to trouble areas, and instead relying on the Marines for rapid reaction. Retaining Marine expeditionary forces in preference to Army forces may be justified since the utility of the Army's light infantry divisions can be debated--and indeed has been since their creation nine years ago. The Reagan Administration justified the LIDs by emphasizing the need to respond to events anywhere in the world by rapidly dispatching U.S. forces. But history indicates that the United States may not need all of these divisions. Between 1945 and 1978, 215 incidents required some sort of U.S. military action, but only about 5 percent of them required a force of division size or larger. One can argue that other units--including the Army's airborne and air assault forces and the Marine Corps's three divisions--provide sufficient rapid response.

Other questions arise about the capability of the LIDs once they have been transported, presumably to a hostile location. With 870 jeeps, 135 motorcycles, and 41 utility helicopters for transportation, a light infantry division has limited mobility, and most of its 10,000 to 11,000 soldiers would have to move by foot. A LID also has limited firepower, particularly against an enemy with any kind of armored vehicles. Each division has only 44 long-range antiarmor missile launchers, 62 howitzers, and 29 armed helicopters; the most numerous antiarmor weapon in the LID--162 Dragon medium-range antitank missile launchers--has limited capability against modern tanks.

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3. The Army also includes approximately 15,000 soldiers in its Special Forces Branch. Special operations forces are designed to perform quick insertions and covert operations, as well as numerous other tasks. These forces are lightly equipped and easily deployed.

Marine divisions, in contrast, contain much more firepower and more transportation assets, particularly when deployed as part of a task force. Specifically, each division includes 44 tanks, 110 light-armored vehicles, and 96 155mm howitzers. In addition, each task force's air wing includes 24 attack helicopters and 60 Harrier aircraft. Thus, although not designed to combat a heavily armored foe or move rapidly over terrain, Marine forces are more adequately prepared to face a wider range of threats than are the Army's light infantry divisions.

Perhaps the Department of Defense made the strongest statement about the utility of the LIDs in combat when it failed to use any light infantry forces during Operation Desert Storm. That conflict occurred halfway around the world with very little warning and was initiated by a foe who was relatively unsophisticated compared with the forces of the former Soviet Union against which the U.S. military was designed to fight. The need to establish some military presence in theater very rapidly seemingly would have argued for the use of light infantry forces. Nevertheless, none of the LIDs was deployed.

Another telling experience has been that of the 10th Mountain Division--a light infantry division--in Somalia. The division's firepower and protection proved to be inadequate against even the unsophisticated and poorly equipped troops of a Somali warlord. As a result, elements of an Army heavy division were dispatched to Somalia to provide armored protection to U.S. forces there.

Despite the fact that the LIDs were designed to be deployed by air, the divisions are more likely to be transported by sea because of a shortage of airlift assets and the need to move other assets first. In any crisis, airlift will probably be devoted first to moving support equipment for tactical air forces, air defense units, and other Army units such as the 82nd airborne and 101st air assault divisions. Thus, the advantage that the LIDs might have over Marine units--rapid response and deployability--would be negated by their dependence on sealift.

In light of the capability for rapid response in the Marine Corps and elsewhere in the Army, one could also raise questions about the Army's need for both an airborne and an air assault division. The former is designed to be dropped by parachute into hostile territory when no seaport or airport is available for debarkation; the latter is designed to be deployed by helicopter to relatively remote locations, although the deployment must be staged from a protected area. The United States has not conducted a parachute assault involving an entire division since World War II. It carried out drops including one brigade--about one-third of a division--in Korea and Vietnam and in

Panama in 1990. In Operation Desert Storm, portions of the 82nd Airborne were sent to the Middle East early in the operation, but they did not parachute in and, once reinforced by later-arriving heavy combat units, were assigned supporting roles and were not involved in any major battles.

Additional paratroop-qualified units exist in the special forces branch of the Army, which, at 15,000 soldiers, is about the same size as a division. Special forces units are used to perform tasks such as covert operations and strikes deep behind enemy lines. All special forces personnel are qualified for parachute drop. Therefore, an entire division designed to be dropped by parachute, such as the 82nd, may represent more capability for parachute drops than the United States now needs.

One could conclude from this discussion that the Marine Corps could perform the mission assigned to the Army LIDs, and that the specialized mission of the 82nd Airborne is no longer likely to be performed on a large scale. Thus, one way to illustrate the savings from eliminating these overlapping or outdated capabilities would be to eliminate all but one of the remaining light divisions from the Army's active forces. Forces disbanded would include two light infantry divisions and portions of the airborne and air assault divisions. To achieve an orderly drawdown, one division would be eliminated each year, starting in 1995. The option would retain one airborne division consisting of two air assault brigades and one airborne brigade. About 70,000 soldiers, including both personnel directly associated with the divisions and people who support them, would be eliminated from the active Army. Compared with the Administration's defense plan, total savings would be $520 million in 1995 and $14.5 billion through 1999 (see Table 1).

TABLE 1. SAVINGS RESULTING FROM RELYING MORE ON THE MARINE CORPS FOR EXPEDITIONARY FORCES
(By fiscal year, in millions of dollars of defense budget authority)

Change	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	Total
Reduce Number of Army Light Divisions	520	1,810	3,170	4,220	4,740	14,460

SOURCE: Congressional Budget Office based on Department of Defense data.

Despite these savings and the shortcomings of the light infantry divisions, eliminating them would reduce U.S. defense capability in certain situations. For example, LIDs might be useful for defending areas such as airports or seaports before other forces arrived if the enemy did not have armored capability. Eliminating some of the Army's light forces would make the U.S. military rely more heavily on the Marines for quick response to crises and in contingency operations.

REDUCE AIRCRAFT ASSIGNED TO SUPPORT GROUND FORCES

Ground forces typically do not conduct operations without air support. Air cover is needed for two reasons--to prevent enemy aircraft from attacking the forces on the ground and to attack enemy targets, such as command centers and supply points, that are beyond the reach of ground-based artillery. Each of the services, however, operates aircraft of some type. Thus, the United States has redundant capabilities for providing air support to ground forces.

Make the Army Responsible for Its Own Close Air Support and Battlefield Interdiction

General Powell's report referred to the issue of providing close air support to ground forces as the one aspect that has probably spawned the most debate about roles and missions since the Key West agreement. Close air support (CAS) is "air action against hostile targets which are in close proximity to friendly forces."[4] Battlefield interdiction (BI)--or battlefield air interdiction when Air Force aircraft perform it--is a similar mission, but does not involve targets that are close to friendly forces. Rather, BI, as defined for purposes of this paper, includes attack by whatever means on those targets that could affect the course of the battle in the short term, such as artillery pieces and forces moving into battle.

These missions have traditionally been carried out by aircraft, and the Chairman of the JCS has stated that aircraft from each of the services have the ability--and indeed the responsibility--to conduct close air support missions. Currently, two services--the Army and the Air Force--share primary responsibility for providing CAS to the Army. In addition, the Navy and the Marine Corps have been assigned provision of CAS for the Army as a collateral mission for their air assets. Thus, in this area, the services have

4. Chairman of the JCS, *Report*, p. III-15.

multiple layers of redundancy when it comes to providing air support to the Army's ground forces.

Even though the Air Force has been assigned the responsibility to provide CAS to the Army for the past 50 years, several defense experts have expressed concerns and doubts about the willingness or ability of the Air Force to provide adequate air support to the Army. The Air Force does have an airplane dedicated solely to CAS--the A-10--but doubts about the Air Force's enthusiasm for the CAS mission may have been fueled by the Air Force's periodic attempts to eliminate all of the A-10s from its force structure. Today, the Air Force retains 144 A-10s, but the number has declined substantially from the 400 that the Air Force fielded in 1988. Moreover, half of these remaining aircraft are in the reserve components.

The Air Force has traditionally allotted 25 percent of its fighter aircraft to the CAS and BI missions. As the number of A-10s declined, the Air Force assigned increasing numbers of its F-16s to these missions. Since the F-16s are multirole aircraft, however, they are not likely to be as well suited to the CAS mission as the A-10, which was designed specifically for that mission. In addition, the F-16s could be called on to perform other missions of more importance to the Air Force than CAS. All of this highlights the concerns Army commanders could have that Air Force aircraft might not be available when the Army needs them to provide air support.

Perhaps in response to this concern, the Army has developed and fielded its own weapons capable of attacking ground targets beyond the reach of direct-fire weapons such as tanks. The premier example of such a weapon is the attack helicopter, which can attack armored as well as soft targets and performed ably in Operation Desert Storm. In addition, the Army is developing fire-support weapons with increasingly long ranges and precision guided munitions capable of attacking some of the BI targets previously accessible only by aircraft.

With the Army fielding hundreds of attack helicopters and increasingly sophisticated fire-support weapons, it may be possible to relieve the Air Force of the primary responsibility for providing CAS. This change would simplify operations since the Air Force would not have to coordinate its air strikes so closely with the Army in order to avoid attacking friendly troops. Moreover, the Air Force could retire all of its A-10s and reduce the number of types of aircraft in its inventory, thereby realizing some budgetary savings. The Army would use its currently planned level of forces--attack helicopters and artillery--to attack targets that might today be assigned to Air Force aircraft.

To illustrate possible savings, the Air Force could eliminate all of the aircraft in its force structure dedicated to CAS and BI. Assuming that these aircraft make up 25 percent of the Air Force's total fighters, this reduction would include all of the A-10s (144 aircraft) and about one-third of the F-16s (216 aircraft) for a total of five wings. Compared with the Administration's plan, annual savings would be on the order of $140 million in 1995 and $3.2 billion over the next five years (see Table 2).

Reducing the size of the Air Force by 25 percent might, however, overly restrict the Air Force's flexibility. Eliminating one-third of the service's F-16s could cut too deeply into the Air Force's overall structure and prevent it from being able to carry out other missions. Since the F-16 is a multirole aircraft, it would be able to perform other missions, even if it were no longer required to provide direct battlefield support to the Army. Thus, eliminating only the A-10s from the Air Force would leave the service with maximum flexibility and capability, without the need to dedicate assets to CAS. The budgetary savings from such a modest reduction to the Air Force would also be modest, less than $500 million per year when fully implemented compared with the Administration's plan.

TABLE 2. SAVINGS RESULTING FROM ILLUSTRATIVE CHANGES IN TACTICAL AIR FORCES SUPPORTING GROUND FORCES
(By fiscal year, in millions of dollars of defense budget authority)

Change	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	Total
Make the Army Responsible for Its Own Close Air Support						
Eliminate five Air Force wings	140	340	610	930	1,170	3,190
Eliminate two Air Force wings	140	340	440	470	490	1,880
Reduce Navy Aircraft in Support of Marine Operations	40	110	200	280	380	1,010

SOURCE: Congressional Budget Office based on Department of Defense data.

Shifting primary responsibility for close air support and battlefield interdiction solely to the Army and eliminating Air Force assets assigned to these missions would, of course, have its disadvantages. Having multiple means of attack is a distinct advantage for a commander because it forces the enemy to defend itself from multiple threats. Thus, if the United States can attack its enemies with fixed-wing aircraft, helicopters, and artillery all at once or in rapid succession, the defender's task becomes that much harder.

Another drawback to eliminating all CAS-dedicated aircraft from the Air Force is that it forfeits the quick reaction and deployability inherent in aircraft. Oftentimes aircraft are the first assets in theater, since additional time is needed to transport Army equipment, including helicopters, to trouble spots. With fewer aircraft capable of CAS in the Air Force inventory, delays may occur before significant assets arrive in theater to perform the CAS mission. And a major lesson some observers have drawn from Operation Desert Storm is that air power can slow or even stop the advance of enemy ground forces. Sharply reducing the number of U.S. aircraft capable of performing the CAS mission would eliminate many of those aircraft that contributed to an early victory in the Gulf War at the cost of few American lives.

Reduce Navy Aircraft in Support of Marine Operations

The Department of the Navy--a microcosm of the Department of Defense--has an army (Marine Corps ground forces) and a navy. By some measures it also has two air forces. One comprises a fleet of aircraft that operate from aircraft carriers and are flown by naval pilots.[5] Marine Corps pilots operate the other air force. They fly their planes from land bases, from the large amphibious ships the Navy uses to transport Marine Corps forces, or from the Navy's aircraft carriers.

If the United States had fought a conventional war with the former Soviet Union, these two air forces would have performed distinct missions. Carrier-based aircraft would have defended carriers against attack by Soviet bombers and conducted attacks against some critical Soviet forces based in out-of-the-way places--for example, strategic submarine bases in the far north of the former Soviet Union. Carriers and their aircraft would also have protected convoys carrying troops and equipment from the United States to Europe from attack by Soviet submarines. Marine Corps air power would

5. The Navy also operates a number of aircraft from land bases that are intended to find and attack enemy submarines in war.

have supported Marine ground forces fighting the Warsaw Pact on NATO's northern and southern flanks. The Marine Corps might have received some air support from aircraft carriers during their operations, but that support was not certain given the myriad other duties the carriers were expected to perform.

In the post-Cold War period, Navy and Marine Corps missions for their aircraft begin to coincide. The United States no longer confronts highly capable threats from submarines or other naval forces. Nor do the countries that seem most threatening today--on which the United States bases its military planning--have highly capable bombers. Thus, the Navy has shifted its mission. It, too, plans to emphasize assisting Marine Corps ground forces in regional contingencies by protecting them from attack by enemy aircraft and attacking enemy forces on the ground.

In addition to providing the same services, these fleets operate the same type of airplane, the single seat version of the F/A-18. The F/A-18, a fighter aircraft that carries air-to-air munitions, also has the capacity to bomb targets on the ground. Under the Administration's plans, the Navy will have 11 air wings for its 12 carriers. Each of these wings will eventually contain 36 single-seat F/A-18s, for a total of about 390 aircraft. Some of these aircraft--a total of 84--will be provided by the Marine Corps, which operates 16 squadrons of F/A-18s that include 12 planes each of a model identical to the Navy's. The Navy is planning to introduce Marine Corps aircraft into its carrier air wings to reflect the increased integration of Navy and Marine Corps operations.

This option proposes gradually cutting 10 of the Navy's F/A-18 squadrons--2 per year over the period from 1995 through 1999. Existing Marine Corps squadrons would then replace the Navy squadrons in the carrier air wings as naval squadrons are cut. The Navy has proposed using Marine Corps aircraft to flesh out its wings in the past, though in more modest numbers. For example, the Navy originally intended to use Marine Corps A-6s--medium-range bombers that are being phased out of naval air wings--to bridge a shortfall in its bomber fleet until delivery of the A-6's intended successor. And the Navy is planning to use some Marine Corps F/A-18 squadrons to fill gaps in its carrier air wings in the near future.

The gradual decline in forces illustrated here should give the Navy and Marine Corps time to evaluate the operational feasibility of this concept. It would, however, produce smaller savings than a more rapid reduction. Operating savings would amount to $40 million in 1995 and total slightly more than $1 billion through 1999 compared with the Administration's plan (see Table 2). Actual operating savings might be somewhat lower, since the Navy

might need to increase the training offered to Marine Corps pilots in those squadrons that operate from aircraft carriers. Acquisition savings would also result since the Department of the Navy would need to procure fewer tactical fighter aircraft. Although the Congressional Budget Office has not estimated the magnitude of these savings since they would not be fully realized for a number of years, they could be as high as $11 billion.

This cut should still leave the Marine Corps and the Navy with acceptable levels of military capability. The Marine Corps planned to provide its own air capability during the Cold War and did not count on the presence of Navy aircraft. But carriers are likely to remain available to support Marine operations during regional conflicts. Thus, Marine Corps F/A-18 squadrons could continue to operate off of the aircraft carriers throughout the conflict. Also, the threat posed by potential adversaries in regional conflicts may be less than that posed formerly by the Soviet Union on NATO's flanks--a threat the Marine Corps might have needed to handle without additional Naval air support.

However, eliminating 120 Navy aircraft would reduce the absolute number of fighter and attack aircraft in U.S. fleets. A number of military experts have expressed concerns about the sufficiency of even the planned level of forces to wage two regional wars at about the same time. Some analysts also argue that the war with Iraq proved that tactical fighter aircraft could be particularly useful in regional conflicts. These proponents of air power would argue that reducing the number of aircraft in the U.S. inventory thus reduces the most effective forces that DoD operates. In addition to being highly capable, tactical fighter forces--especially naval ones--are among the most mobile forces DoD possesses. Reducing naval tactical air forces therefore reduces the assets that might arrive first on the scene. These forces might be particularly useful if a war were to arise rapidly or enemy forces were to move swiftly.

RELY MORE ON THE AIR FORCE FOR POWER PROJECTION

In regional conflicts, the United States can project power onto foreign shores with a variety of assets, including ground forces, cruise missiles launched from ships, and several types of bombers. The Air Force operates medium- and long-range bombers from air bases in the United States and in theater. The Navy operates bombers--"strike" aircraft in Navy terminology--from aircraft carriers at sea. The end of the Cold War reduced the need to withhold long-range bombers for nuclear missions and enabled the Air Force to convert a portion of its strategic bomber fleet to conventional bombers. Consequently,

some defense experts have questioned the need for large numbers of both Navy and Air Force aircraft designed to perform the power projection mission.

The approach in this illustration would rely more heavily on Air Force bombers for missions to project U.S. power. In many cases, land bases for staging Air Force missions would be available in the vicinity of a conflict. In the event that no land bases were available to U.S. aircraft during a crisis, then Air Force bombers could operate from bases in the United States and attack targets worldwide with the aid of in-flight refueling.

When a choice is available, it is usually easier and cheaper to operate aircraft from land than from carriers. For example, during Operation Desert Storm, although six carriers were in the theater of operations, land-based Air Force and Marine Corps aircraft flew 76 percent of the attack missions, and the Navy flew only 24 percent. In fact, some carrier-based strike aircraft were flown to land bases for operation so that they could carry their maximum bomb loads and increase their operating tempos.

In the future, sea-based aircraft may be even less effective than they are today, thus further enhancing the advantage held by land-based aircraft. The Navy is retiring the A-6 medium-range bomber and has firm plans for only an interim replacement--the E/F model of the F/A-18. Since the F/A-18 has a shorter range and a smaller payload than the A-6, this replacement could mean that a number of targets accessible today would be out of range if the plane operates from a carrier deck, especially if carriers stay out to sea to limit their vulnerability to attack by enemy fighters or land-based missiles. When the additional cost of operating aircraft from carriers--as a result of the need for the surface ships to protect and supply the carriers--is taken into account, relying more on land-based aircraft for power projection, rather than on those based on carriers, becomes more attractive.

Increasing the dependence on land-based aircraft for projecting power might not substantially lessen flexibility in war. The Navy maintains that carrier-based aircraft at sea, unlike their land-based counterparts, are not hindered by political constraints imposed by the countries in which they are based or must fly over on the way to the target nation. But the independence of carriers may be somewhat overstated. They, too, may depend on ports in the region of conflict for resupply and maintenance. If the country owning a particular port does not feel that the U.S. carrier battle group is acting in its interests and denies it resupply, the battle group may have to rely on long supply lines reaching back to the United States.